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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000169

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [EZ](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH ON FUTURE OF IRAQ COALITION; POSSIBILITY OF CONTRIBUTION TO NATO TRAINING MISSION

REF: A. STATE 15400

[¶](#)B. PRAGUE 111

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Michael Dodman for reasons  
1.4 B+D

[¶](#)1. (C) Pol-Econ Counselor and DATT raised ref A points on future of Iraq coalition with Czech MFA and MOD Security Policy Departments. The Czechs welcomed the information provided about current thinking on the coalition. They noted, of course, that the Czech parliament had just approved the extension through the end of 2005 of the Czech military police forces training Iraqis near Basra under MNF-I (ref B).

They also noted the comments of Czech ForMin Svoboda on Jan 30 that Czech troops would remain in Iraq after 2005 if the Iraqis indicated a need.

[¶](#)2. (C) While the legislation authorizing the extension calls for the current Czech MP operation to move from MNF-I to the NATO Training Mission-Iraq, it does not contain details about when this should or must happen, only that this will take place "in accordance with the NATO planning process." MOD staff noted that the vagueness was intentional, in part because there is no firm date for NTM-I Phase III to begin, but also because they want to keep their options open. That said, they made clear that the Czechs expect that their existing MP operation will be rehatted under NTM-I (i.e., will remain in their current location). They reiterated their previous assessment, based on discussion during last month's voting, that the NATO aspect was critical to the easy passage of the extension.

[¶](#)3. (C) In terms of the specific points raised in Ref A, MOD and MFA staff both inquired about the plans for the Feb 22-23 Bucharest coalition conference (note: we now understand that Czech Major General Emil Pupis, who oversees Czech foreign deployments, will attend the Bucharest conference). They looked forward to discussions in Bucharest and elsewhere on the future of the coalition and the role that Czech troops can play.

[¶](#)4. (C) We asked about possible Czech response to the NATO SYG's call for NATO members not currently contributing to the first stage of the NTM-I to urgently fill a fifty-man gap. MFA staff indicated they were investigating whether the recently passed resolution provided the GOCR the authority to contribute to this mission. MOD suggested this authority may exist, as the resolution authorizes "up to 100 troops" and only 97 MPs are currently serving near Basra. They said the GOCR wants to be responsive to the NATO request, there are practical problems: the Czech Army wants to maintain the three reserve slots in case emergency circumstances require additional deployments to Basra; more important, the Czechs are not sure that they have the sort of experts required for the training envisioned in the first stage. But, MOD staff made clear that while this is the staff consensus, Defense Minister Kuehnl may decide to overrule their recommendation and make a firm offer of Czech staff for NTM-I at the Nice Ministerial.

CABANISS